

positive steps it has taken in the past to improve respect for human rights and civil liberties. On a recent trip to North Africa, Secretary Clinton was complimentary of Morocco's efforts to reach a peaceful solution in Western Sahara. But the Saharawi people, including Aminatou Haidar, have passionately advocated for the right to self-determination, and the international community, including the U.N., has long supported a referendum on self-determination, which has thus far been blocked by the Moroccan Government.

I have no opinion on what the political status of Western Sahara should be, but I am disappointed that the Moroccan authorities have acted in this way because it only adds to the mistrust and further exacerbates a conflict that has proven hard enough to resolve. Nothing positive will be achieved by denying the basic rights of someone of Ms. Haidar's character and reputation, or restricting the right to travel of other residents of Western Sahara, as the Moroccan authorities have increasingly done in the last 2 months.

In the past, the United States has opposed proposals to extend the U.N.'s mandate in Western Sahara, currently limited to peacekeeping, to human rights monitoring. The recent crack-down on Ms. Haidar and other Saharawis who continue to insist on a referendum on self-determination suggests that human rights monitoring is needed and should be seriously considered when the U.N. mission comes up for renewal in April. I encourage the Department of State to review this question and to consult with the Congress about it.

I am confident that our relations with Morocco, already strong, will continue to deepen in the future. We share many important interests. But the United States was also instrumental in the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and while we sometimes fall short ourselves, we will continue to strive to defend those whose fundamental rights are denied, wherever it occurs.

I appreciate the efforts the Department of State has made to try to help resolve this situation. I urge the Moroccan Government to reconsider its decision to deport Ms. Haidar, which will not advance its interests in the conflict over Western Sahara. It should return her passport, readmit her, and let her return to her home and family.

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VOICE OF AMERICA'S UKRAINIAN SERVICE

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, for six decades the Voice of America's, VOA, Ukrainian-language service has been providing an invaluable service through its consistent broadcasting of factual and comprehensive news and information to the people of Ukraine.

During the first four decades of its existence, the Ukrainian service

reached a Ukrainian population starving for information under an extremely strictly controlled, propagandistic Soviet media environment. Ukrainians went to great lengths and some risks to overcome Soviet censorship, which included the jamming of VOA and other shortwave international broadcasting.

During the Cold War VOA Ukrainian provided its listeners with uncensored news about such monumental events as the Hungarian Revolution, the Prague Spring, rise of Solidarity, and the fall of the Berlin Wall. A variety of shows worked to open the outside world to Ukrainian listeners, including a Popular Music Show, a Youth Show, and the long running series Democracy in Action, which was about how democracy works in the United States.

The Ukrainian service also focused on developments within Ukraine itself. VOA broadcasts about Soviet human rights violations in Ukraine, including its coverage of activities of the Helsinki process and the Helsinki Commission, gave sustenance to Helsinki Monitors and other Ukrainian human rights activists, especially those languishing in the gulag for daring to call upon the Soviet government to live up to its Helsinki Final Act obligations. They knew that they were not forgotten. Furthermore, the Ukrainian service also provided objective information about the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and the development of Ukraine's movement for democracy and independence, culminating in the December 1, 1991, referendum in Ukraine in which an overwhelming majority of Ukrainians voted for the restoration of their nation's independence.

For nearly two decades since, VOA's Ukrainian service has continued to fill an important role in Ukraine's evolving democracy. VOA reported on the challenges that Ukraine faced and on the U.S.'s considerable support and assistance for Ukraine, including in the dismantling of the nuclear arsenal it inherited from the Soviet Union. During the Orange Revolution, VOA Ukrainian helped to reassure millions of Ukrainians that the international community would not sanction electoral fraud.

As Ukraine has evolved, so has the Ukrainian Service. While no longer broadcasting on radio as it did for most of its 60 years, it reaches more Ukrainians than ever with daily broadcasts over Ukrainian television—something unthinkable during Soviet rule—and reporting on its website. It continues to report on what is happening in Ukraine, but also it continues to cover every aspect of American life and society. As Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I commend the ongoing role of VOA's Ukrainian service in helping Ukraine fulfill its aspirations in becoming a more fully democratic, independent, and secure.

WORLD AIDS DAY

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise today in recognition of World AIDS Day, an international commemoration held each year on December 1 to raise awareness of HIV and AIDS around the world. The theme for this year's World AIDS Day is "universal access and human rights."

Around the world, 33 million people were living with HIV in 2007, including 2.7 million new infections. In the U.S., more than 1.2 million people are infected with HIV. According to the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS, or UNAIDS, global reports indicated that 2 million people died from AIDS-related causes in 2007.

Globally, sub-Saharan Africa is the hardest-hit region when it comes to HIV infection, accounting for two-thirds of all people living with HIV and for three-quarters of AIDS deaths in 2007. Sadly, 75 percent of young people worldwide who are diagnosed with HIV are girls living in sub-Saharan Africa.

According to the results of a global youth survey conducted in 99 countries, 50 percent of young people have a dangerously low knowledge of how the disease is contracted and can be prevented. Another report by UNAIDS collected data from 64 countries and found that fewer than 40 percent of young people have basic information about HIV. This knowledge gap is particularly disturbing when taking into account a UNICEF report that indicates that 4.9 million young people, ages 15-24, are living with HIV worldwide.

Despite these statistics, recent advances in prevention and treatment of HIV give hope for the future. Globally, approximately 38 percent of the 730,000 children under 15 who needed antiretroviral drugs to treat HIV in 2008 were receiving the necessary therapy, according to UNAIDS. This is a huge increase from just a little over 10 percent in 2005.

The percentage of pregnant women living with HIV who received antiretroviral treatment to prevent mother-to-child transmission has increased from 9 percent in 2004 to 33 percent in 2007.

Despite recent improvements in treatment coverage and declining mother-to-child transmission of HIV, problems remain in preventing and treating the disease. In addition, the number of new HIV infections continues to outpace the advances made in treatment numbers for every two people put on antiretroviral drugs, another five become newly infected with the disease. Clearly, prevention measures are essential to continue the fight against HIV/AIDS.

No State in the U.S. is immune from the effects of HIV/AIDS, and the epidemic is deeply felt among Marylanders as well. At the end of 2007, Maryland had 28,270 people living with HIV and AIDS. That same year, Maryland ranked fourth in the U.S. for the number of AIDS cases per 100,000 people.

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has estimated that